

Today's Fire Department Does Much More Than Fight Fires

Today's firefighters do far more than fight fires. All firefighters must be trained to offer emergency medical care. They are the first ones called to deal with chemical and environmental emergencies ranging from the suspected presence of carbon monoxide to a gas leak. They may be called to rescue a child who has fallen through the ice or who has locked himself in the bathroom. They rescue people from stalled elevators and those who are trapped in vehicle accidents. They test and maintain their equipment, ranging from self-contained breathing apparatus to hydrants to hoses, power tools and apparatus.

At the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, and in-house, firefighters learn all these skills and more from certified fire instructors who are also experienced firefighters. Through the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighter Training Program students learn all the basic skills they need to respond to fires and to contain and control them. They are also given training in public fire education, hazardous material incident mitigation, flammable liquids, stress management, water rescue procedures, pumps and hydraulics as well as fire behavior and building construction. The intensive five month program for call firefighters involves classroom instruction, fire hose training, firefighter skills training and live firefighting practice.

Fire Department Enforces M.G.L. Chapter 148 and C.M.R. Chapter 527

The Fire Department is legally required to enforce the provisions of Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) Chapter 527. This chapter contains regulations on fireworks, dry cleaning, oil burners, gas stations, liquid propane, plastics, transportation of flammable liquids, above ground and underground storage tanks, manholes, electrical systems, explosives, storage and flammable substances, marine fueling, model rockets, lumber yards, bulk plants, tentage, salamanders, flammable decorations and curtains, cannon or mortar firing, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, obstructions and hazards, combustible fibers, rubbish handling, crop ripening, pesticide storage, and welding and storage. The Fire Department must also enforce the laws contained in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 148

Inspectors must know the regulations they are enforcing and they must know how to apply the regulations to situations in the community. They must communicate information about plan weaknesses or violations and perform follow-up inspections. Just as firefighters are sent to the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy to learn the principles of suppression, fire prevention personnel go to classes to learn the ins and outs of the regulations. These functions also produce a corresponding amount of documentation that must be maintained.

Firefighters Teach the Community Fire and Burn Prevention

Firefighters go out in the community to teach children, the elderly and interested community groups how to protect themselves from fire and burns.

Student Awareness of Fire Education (S.A.F.E.) Program

What Is S.A.F.E.?

The Student Awareness of Fire Education (S.A.F.E.) Program is a state initiative to provide resources to local fire departments to conduct fire and life safety education programs in grades K-12. The mission is to enable students to recognize the dangers of fire and more specifically the fire hazards tobacco products pose.

Key Fire Safety Behaviors

There are 23 Key Fire Safety Behaviors that should be taught in age and developmentally appropriate ways, such as:

- Stop, Drop, and Roll
- Making and Practicing Home Escape Plans
- Reporting Fires and Emergencies
- Crawl Low Under Smoke
- Smoke Detector Maintenance
- Kitchen Safety
- Holiday Safety and more

Fire and life safety is easily combined with math, science, language arts, health, and physical education lessons. Integration into the existing curriculum topics is essential.

Benefits

- Training children reduces anxiety levels so they are able to react to stressful situations
- Fire, School, Health and Police Departments working together to help children survive

- Family medical and health care cost reductions
- Firefighter as a role model
- Fires, burns and deaths reduced.

Proven Success

In the first thirteen years of the S.A.F.E. Program we have honored more than 225 children who have used the lessons they learned in school through the S.A.F.E. Program in real life emergencies. We call these youngsters who remained calm in a difficult situation, our ["YOUNG HEROES"](#). Many families claim they are alive today because their youngsters "made" them install smoke alarms and practice a home escape plan, or reported an emergency, or persuaded a grandmother to 'stop, drop, and roll'. Some success stories are:

- A 12-year old boy blocks smoke by closing the door and covering cracks with a blanket to save four younger siblings.
- A girl leads her brother to safety by crawling low under smoke in the house to outdoors.
- A boy calls rescuers on 9-1-1 to save his sister from choking.
- Smoke detector awakens 7-year old who rouses the family and instructs them to "get out."
- Family who rehearsed home escape plan as a homework assignment use it to get out alive.

How Was S.A.F.E. Originally Funded?

- The careless use and disposal of smoking materials is the single leading cause of fire deaths in the state and in the country.
- Due to the tremendous risk of injury and death in fires started by tobacco products, the Legislature appropriated funding from monies raised through the cigarette sales tax for Fiscal Years 1996 to 2002.